



VIDEO NEWS

ONLINE GOOGLEBOX

Google has launched a beta version of its video search and playback application. Google Video allows you to search the growing web archive of TV programmes, primarily from US channels.

It searches the closed captioning and text descriptions of all the videos in the Google archive. It can also find sections within videos that match the search terms. However, not all results are playable and those that are require Google's own video viewer plug-in. A Mac version will be released soon.

Earlier this year, Google launched a Video Upload Program to enable content creators to fill its archive. Google is encouraging people to continue sending in clips. See <http://video.google.com> for more details.

INTEL STUDIOS

Intel is to create a new digital entertainment company called ClickStar with Revelations Entertainment that will distribute films over the internet to viewers around the world.

ClickStar will offer a pay-per-view online service in which consumers can download and watch first-run, pre-DVD-release films.

ClickStar also says it will offer artist-created entertainment channels directly to consumers. This should give a big boost to independent distributors and film makers.

The principle aim of ClickStar is to beat the pirates at their own game by providing movies online before they are available on DVD, but with copy protection.

REVIEW MEDIA PLAYER

LITE-ON LVD-2010

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.svp.co.uk

DETAILS www.liteonit.com



After broadband internet, media streaming has become the second biggest technology for the networked home. It started with audio devices, but the market has moved on to video since Microsoft led the way with its Media Center technology. The Xbox 360, which is launched later this year, will include media streaming, bringing the concept firmly to the mass market.

In the meantime there are an increasing number of media-streaming devices available. All are capable of displaying the video, audio and photo files from your PC on your living-room TV.

The LVD-2010 is very similar to the Buffalo LinkTheatre we reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* July 2005. It is a combined media-streaming device and DVD player, which is a useful combination for those with little space below their TV.

The setup menus look the same as the Buffalo device's. We installed the provided server software and the LVD-2010 had no problem finding it. An external bridge is provided for a wireless network, but you must connect this to your wired network first to set up the network address and security.

Once the network is set up, you can start streaming files to it. Video quality is good, but the device lacks support for WMV and high-definition video files. It does support XviD, MPEG1 (VCD) and MPEG2 files, however. You can also play DVDs without any problem and the quality is passable, easily matching budget DVD players. Video outputs consist of component (with progressive scan option), composite, S-video and RGB SCART.

Audio files are well supported, with MP3, OGG, WMA and WAV files all played at good quality through either phono stereo outputs or optical connections. There is also photo support for all the file types you could want. It did a surprisingly good job of scaling down our hi-resolution test photos to display them on a 720x576 resolution TV. Unfortunately, the LVD-2010 also lacks the USB port the Buffalo provides for easy photo viewing.

The menus look fine and are straightforward to use. They move slowly from one folder to the next, but this is common for streaming devices. Sadly there is no HD support in the menus, so you are stuck with low-resolution text and thumbnails.

Compared with Pinnacle's ShowCenter 200 (below), we found Lite-On's LVD-2010 lacking. The ShowCenter's Media Connect and WMV support with HD capabilities, along with its compact size, win it for us.

Seth Barton

✓ Cheap; wireless; SCART output

✗ No HD or WMV support

SPECIFICATIONS PC required with Windows 98 SE or above; component, S-video, composite, SCART, stereo outputs, coaxial S/PDIF, optical S/PDIF, network, 108Mbit/s wireless 802.11g. **Part code** LVD-2010

HOTLIST MEDIA PLAYER

PINNACLE ShowCenter 200

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £165 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.pinnaclesys.com

The ShowCenter 200 streams media files from your PC to your living room using Microsoft's Media Connect software. It supports all the most common photo, audio and video file types and is easy to install. Its wired and wireless connections mean it will fit into any home network, too. It's the best media player on the market.



SPECIFICATIONS 1.5GHz PC required with Windows XP with SP1 and 256MB RAM; SCART, component, S-video, and composite outputs, two stereo phono outputs, coaxial S/PDIF output, optical S/PDIF outputs, USB, 100Mbit/s network, wireless 802.11g

HOTLIST DIGITAL TV TUNER

NEBULA ELECTRONICS DigiTV USB

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £99 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Nebula Electronics 01689 897090

DETAILS www.nebula-electronics.com

Most TV cards have a reputation for being difficult to install and use, so it's a relief to find the DigiTV USB. Simple to install, it automatically locates all the digital channels and downloads a seven-day guide. Easy to program and full of clever features, this is the best digital TV tuner on the market.



SPECIFICATIONS RF input, MPEG2 recording, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** DigiTV USB2

HOTLIST DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA

PANASONIC NV-GS75

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £430 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.rgbdirect.co.uk

DETAILS www.panasonic.co.uk

Panasonic's NV-GS75 offers three CCDs at an affordable price. The technology gives the camera excellent picture quality and vivid colours. Only the 10x optical zoom seems a bit stingy compared to other models on the market.

Despite being lightweight and plastic, the NV-GS75 feels well made. The lack of a true 16:9 mode is the only big let-down on an otherwise excellent and affordable DV camera.



SPECIFICATIONS Mini DV camcorder, 3 CCD, 10x optical zoom, USB2 and FireWire interfaces. **Part code** NVGS75



REVIEW PORTABLE DVD PLAYER

MUSTEK
PL510

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £250 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.3wisemonkeys.co.ukDETAILS www.mustek.com

Portable DVD players are facing stiff competition from increasingly inexpensive notebook PCs. Even the cheapest laptops are capable of playing DVDs, and they have larger screens as well. However, for simplicity and size the portable DVD player still can't be beaten.

Prices of portable DVD players have tumbled, with small 7" screen models now costing around £150. Mustek's PL510 is a comparative monster with its 10" diagonal display. Putting it next to a 7" player we were surprised at how the larger screen made movie watching far more enjoyable. Despite the extra screen size it still rested comfortably in our laps, though, and it weighs a touch over a kilogram including the battery.

Battery life is around two-and-a-half hours, which is long enough to get through almost any film, bar the extended versions of *Lord of the Rings*. This comparatively short life isn't surprising given the extra drain on the battery from the large screen. The battery itself is detachable and clips on the rear of the unit, spoiling its sleek looks. The rest of the build quality feels average, although small jars and knocks did nothing to interfere with playback.

The screen provides above-average playback quality. There is a little noise in the picture on close inspection, but it is on a par with other players we've seen. Colour is good and skin tones look realistic. Unfortunately, the viewing angles are not so great. Moving the angle up or down immediately results in a milky or dark display. Viewing from left to right isn't quite so bad, but you will have to be



pretty intimate with someone to watch a film together.

Twin headphone sockets are provided for this purpose, which is ideal for train or plane journeys with a friend. The unit supports Dolby Digital decoding and sounds great. Every crunch in *Spiderman 2*'s Dolby Digital stereo mix was clearly rendered, and not at the expense of the dialogue.

The PL510 has an SD/MMC card slot for viewing photographs. It also has a progressive scan minijack output, though no lead is provided, and we can't see who would use it anyway. It also lacks DivX playback, so those who like to download movies should probably avoid it.

The PL510 is a decent portable DVD player. It would be ideal to take on holiday to keep the kids entertained in the evening. The bigger screen size is certainly worth paying for.

Seth Barton

✓ 10" LCD screen; twin headphone sockets; SD card slot

✗ Poor viewing angles

SPECIFICATIONS 10" LCD, 2.5 hours' playback, multi-region DVD, SD/MMC card reader

HOTLIST DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA

CANON
MVX10i

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £549 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.askdirect.co.ukDETAILS www.canon.co.uk

Canon's DigiC processing system gives this DV camera excellent image quality. There's little digital noise, and an effective image stabiliser removes all but the worst wobbles. The MVX10i is well made and easy to handle, with an easy-to-use menu. A maximum 1,632x1,224 still image resolution and a superb TFT screen complete the package; the only thing missing is a manual focus ring.



SPECIFICATIONS Mini DV cassette, 10x optical zoom, USB and FireWire interfaces. Part code 9049A007AA



HOTLIST DVD AUTHORIZING SOFTWARE

ULEAD
DVD MovieFactory 4

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £25 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.ulead.co.uk

DVD MovieFactory is still the best choice for anyone who wants to perform DVD authoring on the cheap. Its menu design is comprehensive and easy to use, and its set-top recorder compatibility, direct tape-to-disc burning and editing of pre-recorded discs are all welcome for this very reasonable price.



REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or later, 800MHz Pentium III processor, 128MB RAM (512MB recommended), 950MB disk space plus 5GB for video

CHOOSING A...
DV
CAMERA

Step-by-step guide to buying the ideal digital video camera

1 If you just want to make home movies, a £250 digital video (DV) camera with the specs shown below will be fine. A range of auto-exposure modes will ensure you get decent results in all conditions. The LCD screen provides easy playback on location, while the remote allows for comfortable viewing on the sofa. If you'll be using the zoom a lot, concentrate on the optical zoom spec, as the digital zoom's effective range depends on this.

2 If you want to edit video, get a model with DV-in. You can then transfer edited footage back to MiniDV tape and run off VHS copies via the camera's S-video out. Cameras with S-video in can often be used to capture analogue video too.

3 Enthusiasts will pay for a more flexible camera. A good manual focus and colour viewfinder will make for better camerawork, an external microphone will transform your audio, and good battery and charger options will keep you filming for longer. A high-resolution CCD might improve video quality, but while this and a flash memory slot will make your DV camera double as a digital camera, quality will be basic.

4 Miniature DV cameras, especially those using the tiny MicroMV tapes, may tempt gadget-lovers, but picture quality may be compromised. Models with fancy on-camera editing are a waste of money; that's what your PC is for.

5 If you're serious about film-making, £1,500 buys you a DV camera with superb optics, three CCDs and the requisite connectors to attach equally expensive professional AV accessories.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

CCD: 400,000 pixels

ZOOM: 10x optical/300x digital

VIDEO PORTS:

FireWire out, S-video out

MONITORING: Mono viewfinder, 2.5" colour LCD

MEDIA: MiniDV tape

STILLS CAPTURE: 640x480 to tape

EXTRAS: Remote control